

10

HISTORICAL SERMON

OF

First Presbyterian Church,

READING, PA.,

BY

REV. WALLACE RADCLIFFE, PASTOR.

1872-

Delivered July 9th, 1876.

READING, PA.:

OWEN, BOOK AND JOB PRINTER, 515 COURT STREET,
1876.

READING, July 10, 1876.

REV. WALLACE RADCLIFFE:

Reverend and Dear Sir:

The undersigned members of the congregation of the First Presbyterian Church in this city, being greatly gratified and instructed by the sermon preached by you on Sabbath morning, July 9, 1876, on the History of Presbyterianism in Reading and in the county of Berks, and appreciating the labor required in the compilation of the discourse from the material at hand, and consulting the wishes of a large number of your auditors, would respectfully request of you a copy for publication in pamphlet form.

The history of our denomination may, we believe, in this manner be best preserved and handed down to those who come after. The members of the congregation, and others at a distance, who still cling to the memories of their connection with us may also desire to have this CENTENNIAL memorial of our ZION to look upon and transmit to their children.

LOT BENSON,	MARY ECKERT,
J. H. STERNBERGH,	EDWIN F. SMITH,
W. G. MCGOWAN,	O. HOWARD ROYER,
W. N. COLEMAN,	F. D. NAGLE,
JAS. F. SMITH,	ALBERT R. DURHAM.

STOCKTON HOTEL, CAPE MAY, N. J.,
July 21st, 1876.

TO DR. LOT BENSON, WM. G. MCGOWAN and others:

Gentlemen:

In accordance with your request of 20th inst., the Historical Discourse is placed at your disposal with the hope that its publication may be the means of perpetuating an honorable record and promoting the interests of our cherished Presbyterianism.

Fraternally yours,

WALLACE RADCLIFFE.

Anniversary Services.

[The following account of the services is compiled from the *Reading Times and Dispatch*, and *Reading Eagle*, of July 10th, 1876.]

Yesterday morning the First Presbyterian Church, on South Fifth Street, celebrated the sixty-third anniversary of the dissemination of Presbyterianism in Reading. It was a red letter day in the church calendar, and as such was most becomingly observed. The audience room was in holiday attire. From walls and gallery and organ flashed forth the brilliant colors of the American flag, while the pulpit and surroundings were exquisitely decorated with some of Flora's rarest gifts. It was a festival scene such as was never before witnessed in the history of this church, and the beauty of which was measurably heightened by the gay summer toilets of the many ladies in the audience. Under the organ loft and immediately over the main isle was suspended a bell formed of trailing lycopodium and evergreens, around the church were placed large and small silk flags, and the organ was decorated with American banners and the banner of the State of Pennsylvania. The gallery fronts displayed U. S. flags, and from the centre of the pulpit arch two U. S. flags depended in graceful folds that were caught up curtain-like on either side, and between these two flags hung a gold-fringed Blue Banner of the Covenant bearing on its front in gilt a St. Andrew's Cross encircled with the words "For Christ's Crown and Covenant." The floral decorations were of the most beautiful design, very profuse, and had a novelty in their arrangement that made them all the more attractive. Elegant wild and hot-house flowers surrounded the pulpit desk. The enwreathed and garlanded communion table was a perfect bank of wild flowers, fern and cultivated hollyhock, surmounted by a floral bell. A decidedly new feature of the display was an American flag composed entirely of flowers. Geranium and larkspur, white and blue, made up the colors. It stood upon a trimmed and decorated vase of flowers, and was a most exquisite piece of workmanship. Opposite upon the left side of the platform stood another vase as beautifully decorated and filled with rare plants and flowers. The newel posts were gracefully decorated. On the right of the pulpit and against the stand light, just below the globes were the figures "1812" in flowers, and on

the left of the pulpit against the stand light were the figures "1876" also formed of flowers. The E. J. Richards memorial tablet was tastefully decorated with a running vine. The pulpit was flanked with bouquets and baskets of flowers.

These flag and floral arrangements were in the hands of a committee of young ladies and gentleman, whose taste and energy deserve great credit for the unusual beauty and grace with which the church was decorated. The beautiful blue banner was also the work of the young ladies.

The music of the day was of unusual excellence. It was rendered by a large choir composed of many of the best musical amateurs of the city, under the direction of Wm. G. McGowan, leader of the church choir. After the Gloria in Excelsis, as a voluntary, by Prof. Wm. Stapf, who presided at the organ, the anthem "The Lord our God is good," from the oratorio of "Eli," was sung with grand effect. The crowded congregation then rose and sang

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below,
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost."

The Invocation was made by Rev. W. R. Templeton, of the Second (African) Presbyterian Church. The 1116th Hymn in the Church Hymn Book, beginning

"Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Sion, city of our God!" &c.,

was then sung. The fourth chapter of the Book of Joshua was read and the Prayer of Thanksgiving offered by Rev. W. J. Arney, stated supply of Bethany and Robesonia chapels. The duet, "Angels are watching overhead," was exquisitely rendered by Mrs. A. R. Durham and Mrs. J. C. Brown, who for fifteen years have been prominently identified with this part of the public worship in this church. According to the appointment of the General Assembly, the historical discourse of this church and congregation was then preached by the pastor, Rev. Wallace Radcliffe. Then was sung the 1107th Hymn, beginning

"Oh! where are kings and empires now
Of old, that went and came?
But Lord! thy church is praying yet,
A thousand years the same," &c.,

and the benediction was pronounced by Rev. W. R. Templeton.

The Historical Sermon.

“This day shall be unto you for a memorial.”—Exodus 12:14.

It is eminently appropriate that in the centennial anthem of the American Republic the Presbyterian Church should bear a prominent and honored part. Freedom is under perpetual obligation to her. Her record is one of unalloyed sympathy with Republican government. By her very order and doctrine her influence is unhesitating and unmistakable to the establishment and perpetuity of free institutions. The world over, this church has ever stood first and immovable for liberty, law, and the rights of man. The testimony of historians with no denominational bias to warp their judgment has been clear and explicit. Buckle says, “By them the dying spark of freedom was kindled into a blaze.” Montesquieu, “Geneva is the mother of republics.” Froude, “To John Knox England owes a debt for liberty it cannot pay.” Motley, with still stronger emphasis, says, “Europe owes her political liberty to Calvinism.”

PRESBYTERIANISM IN THE REVOLUTION.

Those who sought refuge in this country by the very teaching of their church found themselves in immediate sympathy with that Republicanism which Isaac Taylor called “the Presbyterian principle.” The Mecklenburg Declaration drawn up by a Presbyterian community antedates the Declaration of Independence by more than a year. Advocates of the English rule ascribed the revolt and revolution as early as 1764 mainly to the Presbyterian clergy and laity. An association of the colonists called the Sons of Liberty was known more familiarly in New York as the “Presbyterian Junto.” Bancroft, a New England Unitarian, declares that “he who will not honor the memory and influence of Calvin knows but little of the origin of American liberty.” And again the same historian says more explicitly that “the first voice publicly raised in America to dissolve all connection with Great Britain came not from the Puritans of New England, nor the Dutch of New York,

nor the planters of Virginia, but from the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians." Our people gave freely of their substance; Presbyterian voices were outspoken in town-meeting and Halls of Congress, in presbyteries and synods; our churches became recruiting-posts, our pulpits rang with trumpet tones of patriotic appeal, and our ministers, laying aside their robes, marched at the head of their people into the camp of the Revolutionists. "A Presbyterian royalist was a thing unheard of," is the testimony of Wm. B. Reed, himself an Episcopalian. So general and determined was this sympathy of our church with the cause of the colonies that the fear was publicly and widely expressed that it would become the established church of the new nation. And so we must be kindly indulged when in yonder blue field that bears the stars of the Republic, our partial imagination recognizes a suggestion that our order and discipline gave to our free institutions much of their beauty and stability; nor be charged with a vain presumption when to-day we hang between the folds of our National ensign that blue Banner of the Covenant under which our fathers fought and died for liberty of conscience at Bothwell Bridge. Accordant with the spirit of the day, Presbyterianism is reviving old memories, recalling the old names and associations, gathering up the heroism and nobility of the past one hundred years, that she may tell it to the generations following. She sends out her Old Mortality to restore the names of Mackemie and M'Millan, and summons her scholars and divines to unveil a statue of John Witherspoon, Presbyterian minister and President of Princeton College, whose was the only clerical name attached to the Declaration of Independence.

READING IN THE EARLY DAYS.

In accordance with her command we gather up the records of this church, which, although they do not extend to Revolutionary times, may still contain material for our interest and the benefit of the future historian.

At the period with which our interest begins Mt. Penn looked down upon a quiet, modest little borough nestled cosily among the hills, its 3,500 inhabitants dwelling in simple-minded neighborliness that never dreamed of a city's importance and rivalries. The names of its few streets still indicated the loyalty and family attachment of the proprietary, e. g., King, Queen and Princess, Penn, Callowhill and Hamilton streets. The streets were as destitute of

gas, though safer, as are the streets of our economical city still after midnight. A pavement was the luxury of the favored few. The old Academy was so far in the country that the pupils from the town carried their noonday lunches with them. The houses, all of them plain, and many of them still constructed of the frame and logs, clustered round the Square where the more pretentious private dwellings were, among which were the house whose first floor was the Office of Discount and Deposit, the building opposite since used by the Farmers' Bank, and one three-story brick house which rose in solitary and imposing grandeur. Within these houses the domestic circles were just then very much interested in the experiment of a new fuel in the shape of anthracite coal and a coal-stove just introduced by one of the enterprising townsmen. In the upper part of the Square was a small market house built by Gov. Hiester because he "pitied the country people." In the centre stood the Court House, built in 1762, of which the unrelenting historian says that it was "remarkable for nothing but ugliness," and that it was "placed in the very centre of the Borough that it may be most advantageously seen and most effectually mar the appearance of Reading." On the corner of Penn and Callowhill streets stood the State House, a plain but more respectable looking brick building, near by the historic low-roofed trading-post of Conrad Weiser, while beyond on the corner of Callowhill and Washington streets stood the uncouth-looking two-story stone Prison. Washington street was the religious centre. Here stood a one-story log house erected by the Friends, said to have been the first house for public worship in Reading. Close at hand was the large German Lutheran Church, now known to all of us as "Old Trinity." Just above the German Reformed Church, on what is now Seventh street, near the "Old Academy," stood the German Roman Catholic Chapel. The gossips and politicians of the borough were dependent upon the Reading Adler, issued once a week in the German language. The click of the telegraph was unheard. No bridge spanned the Schuylkill, the locomotive was not dreamed of, nor did even the mellow horn of the canal boatman wake the slumbering echoes of these hills. A stage coach that left Philadelphia daily at 3 a. m. and at 8 p. m. came thundering up to Coleman's Hotel on Callowhill street, now Fifth near Penn, was the one event of the day sufficient for the usual intercourse of trade, and bringing the tri-weekly newspapers from Philadelphia, which just then were full of interesting gossip and stirring news concerning the war with England just begun.

PRESBYTERIANISM IN READING.

The materials for a full and connected history of this church are few and meagre. All the earlier records, both of the Session and Trustees, are now irrevocably lost. Previous to the year 1812, the only English preaching in the Borough of Reading was an occasional sermon about once a month on Sabbath afternoon, by the Rev. H. A. Muhlenberg, in the German Lutheran Church. The number of English speaking people was gradually though slowly increasing, and among them a number of Presbyterian education and affinities, foremost among whom was John McKnight, Cashier of the branch bank of the Pennsylvania Bank, to whose interest and zealous labors is largely due the establishment of this church, and whose memory is still green for his faithfulness and sacrificing devotion in the early history of Reading Presbyterianism. At the earnest solicitation of Rev. H. A. Muhlenberg and especially of his wife, Mr. John McKnight started one bright morning early in 1812, on horseback, for Brandywine Manor, in Chester county, where his former friend and schoolmate, John F. Grier, a graduate of Dickinson College, was a student of theology with the Rev. Nathan Grier. Returning with him the next day, a little meeting for prayer and business held in the parlor of the Banking House on Penn street, may be accepted as the beginning, though not the organization of the **FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF READING.**

Here it was ascertained that the sum of \$300 per annum could be raised, Mr. Grier proposing to supplement his salary by teaching school. His house and school and church were all in the "Old Academy," on the spot now occupied by the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad shops on the corner of Seventh and Chestnut streets. Here, through the week, he gathered about him a large and prosperous school of young men and women, and earned a reputation in Princeton College for the faithfulness and skill with which he trained his pupils. On the afternoon of each Sabbath he gathered in the same place his little congregation.

THE FIRST COMMUNION

was administered in 1813 by Rev. Nathan Grier assisted by two of his elders from the Presbyterian Church of Brandywine Manor. The early communions are remembered by one at least still with us who as a child looked with wondering eyes upon the communion table extemporized from the long benches of the school-room, the

wine dispensed from the borrowed tankard, while at the head of the table sat the youthful pastor distributing the elements to about twenty-five communicants, among them names yet familiar to us—John McKnight, Wm. Bell, Samuel Bell, Hannah Biddle, an Episcopalian, William Moore, Louis Reese, William James, a Baptist, and others. The exact date of organization is not known, the only facts available being that some time in 1813 John McKnight, William Bell, William Moore and Charles Snowden, were ordained ruling elders, and that in Gillet's History of the Presbyterian Church, Vol. 1, p. 492, it is said that "in 1814 Rev. John F. Grier commenced his labors in Reading," which may mean only that in that year he reported to Presbytery the organization of his church during that or the preceding year. In November, 1814, Rev. J. F. Grier was ordained by the Presbytery of New Castle. The first recorded report of the church is as a member of the Presbytery of Philadelphia in the minutes of the General Assembly of 1819.

The Christian energy of the few was shown in an early effort to establish a Sabbath School, at that time an institution looked upon with suspicion and discountenanced as dangerous in this community. The first effort commenced about 1814 or '15, and lived for but part of the year. In 1819 a union effort was attempted, under the title of the

"SABBATH SCHOOL ASSOCIATION OF READING,"

the greater part of whose working material came from the little Presbyterian church. The first meetings, I believe, were held in the "Old Academy," but it was very soon transferred to the "State House," where, under the leadership of Thomas O'Brien, still living and honored among us, Elijah Dechert and Hon. William Darling, devoted members of this church, the last two for many years honored elders, it became an honor and blessing to the community, despite the frequent withdrawal of the children in the formation of denominational schools, until 1848, when, on the completion of this church edifice, the school, which for a time had been exclusively Presbyterian in its management, was consolidated with the church school. Of those who in 1819 aided in forming that Sabbath School Association there remain only Sarah McKnight, now Mrs. Davenport Orrick, Ann Berkinbine, now Mrs. Henry Mears, Sophia Repplier, now Mrs. Arch. McElroy, and Dr. Lot Benson. The rest have fallen on sleep.

With the growth of a few years the congregation moved for a church edifice, and hesitating between three sites—South Fifth between Chestnut and Spruce Streets, the south-west corner of Fifth and Penn Streets, and West Penn above Second—as is frequently the case in such differences, ended by selecting the worst, that on the north side of Penn above Second Street. With feelings of the liveliest pleasure, no doubt, these few struggling ones read in the *Berks and Schuylkill Journal*, June 14th, 1822:

“The corner stone of the new church now building in the Borough of Reading, will be laid on Sunday, the 22d of June, next; on which occasion divine services will be performed in the German and English languages. All who feel an interest in promoting such designs are politely invited to attend and share in the gratifying scene.”

SAMUEL BELL,
WILLIAM JAMES,
LEWIS REESE,
Building Committee.

The weather proving unfavorable, the services were postponed for another week, and a similar notice appeared offering the additional attraction of “a band of vocal and instrumental music.” In the *Berks and Schuylkill Journal* for July 4th, 1823, the following notice appeared, presumably from the pen of Rev. J. F. Grier:

LAYING THE CORNER STONE OF THE FIRST CHURCH.

On Sunday last the corner stone of the First Presbyterian Church in this Borough was laid in due form amidst a very large and attentive auditory. The day being unusually pleasant, multitudes collected on the site at an early hour. Precisely at ten o'clock the procession of church officers and assistants arrived and took their seats under an extensive awning, where the band of vocal and instrumental musicians had previously arranged themselves. The services commenced with the 100th Psalm in English to that celebrated piece of Dr. Madan, called “Denmark.” This was succeeded by a hymn in German, composed for the occasion. The Rev. Mr. Muhlenberg, of the Lutheran Church in this borough, made a brief introductory address and led in prayer in the German language. The Rev. J. N. C. Grier, of Chester County, preached a very appropriate and animated sermon from II. Chronicles, 6: 40. This was succeeded by a delightful piece of German music; after which the Rev. J. F. Grier, pastor of the congregation, performed the ceremony of laying the corner stone and led in prayer. The service was concluded with Psalm 118, L. M., and the Apostolical benediction. There was deposited in the corner stone a box containing two New Testaments in the German and English languages, stereotyped for the Bible Society of Philadelphia, and also a brief

record in the Latin language of the following import: "Under the auspices of the Almighty, the English inhabitants of Reading, by the kind and fraternal assistance of their German brethren, founded this edifice for the perpetual worship of their great Creator and Redeemer, on the 29th of June, A. D. 1823, and by this votive tablet they D. D. D. Q. to Jehovah Jesus forever as a place of Divine worship for themselves and their posterity, &c. In the 47th year of American Independence, James Monroe, Esq., being President of the United States, Joseph Hiester, Esq., our townsman, being Governor of this State, William Witman, Esq., being Chief Burgess of this Borough, Robert Porter, Esq., being President of the Court, Gabriel Hiester, Jr., Esq., and William Witman, Esq., being Associates." That upon this foundation might be erected an edifice that should long stand as the temple of the living God, and be calculated to promote His glory and subserve His gracious purposes, was the prayer of those who assisted in the ceremony. And when from its ruins this record shall once more return to the light of day, may it find the people of the United States free, prosperous, and happy, and the "knowledge of the Lord covering the earth as the waters cover the sea."

Pastor :

Rev. John F. Grier.

Elders :

William Bell,

William Moore,

John McKnight.

Trustees :

William Bell,
Dennis O'Brien,

John McKnight,
Samuel Bell, Sr.,
Rev. J. F. Grier.

Samuel Baird,
Lewis Reese,

Treasurer :

William Darling.

Building Committee :

Lewis Reese,

William James,

Samuel Bell, Sr.

Master Mason :

George Maltzberger.

Chief Carpenters :

George Call,

Michael Reifschnyder.

The building was completed in less than a year. In anticipation of that event, however, appeared an advertisement to this effect :

SALE OF PEWS.—The pews in the Church situated on Penn Street, will be sold by public auction on Monday evening, the 3d of May, in the church.
By order of the Trustees.

WILLIAM DARLING, Treasurer.

And soon after the following :

DEDICATION.—The new church in the Borough of Reading will, Deo Volente, be dedicated to the worship of the Triune God, on the first Sabbath in May next, being second day of the month. Clergy of the different denominations will officiate in the German and English languages. Our friends and neighbors are respectfully invited to participate in the devotional exercises of the occasion.

WILLIAM JAMES,
LEWIS REESE,
SAMUEL BELL,
Building Committee.

The following account of that dedication subsequently appeared from the pen of Rev. Dr. Grier :

DEDICATION OF THE FIRST CHURCH.

“According to previous arrangements the new church in West Penn street was dedicated to the service of Almighty God on last Sabbath. The concourse of citizens and strangers was great. Eight clergymen from four different denominations of Christians were present and officiated interchangeably as a band of brethren. The exercises of the day were commenced by the Rev. Mr. Muhlenberg, of this borough, with a most eloquent and pertinent address in the German language. The Rev. Dr. Ely, of Philadelphia, gave the dedicatory prayer in a manner highly appropriate and impressive. The Rev. Dr. Brodhead, of Philadelphia, preached the sermon from 2 Chron. 7 : 16. “For now have I chosen and sanctified this house that my name may be there forever and mine eye and mine heart may be there perpetually.” At two o’clock divine service was resumed in an address and prayer in the German language by the Rev. Mr. Rentze, of New Holland, which was succeeded by a sermon from the Rev. Dr. Ely, in his usual animating, interesting and instructive manner. At five o’clock the Rev. Mr. Herman, of Heidelberg, introduced the services by an address and prayer in the German language, when the Rev. J. N. C. Grier, of Chester County, delivered an interesting, practical discourse with universal acceptance. At eight o’clock the audience assembled in the large Lutheran church, which was brilliantly lighted, and generously offered by that congregation, when the Rev. Dr. Ely addressed a crowded auditory in a strain of sacred eloquence seldom equaled.”

Thus was began the history of the “Old White Church” which standing on its knoll toward the foot of yonder street seemed to the pious mothers in Israel like another Mount Zion in miniature, and which, small and unpretentious, with its homely square pillars, its straight pews, widely-ranging galleries and high-barricaded pulpit

became the birth-place of many souls and is a cherished memory to a few who remain.

Immediately upon entering the new church edifice a Sabbath School was organized under the efficient superintendence of Elijah Dechert, which, with a noble succession of such able and devoted Superintendents as William Darling, William Strong, William M. Baird, Caleb Wheeler and J. H. Sternbergh, has been an unfailing and abundant supply to the numbers and vigor of this church. This school is at present well officered, numbers three hundred pupils, and is in the most flourishing stage of its career.

In 1825 we find the pastor enrolled in the list of members of the Presbytery of Philadelphia as a Doctor of Divinity, and the first report of the church's work, which is that of nine infants and four adults baptized and a total membership of sixty-eight. In 1827 four new elders were ordained, viz: Lewis Reese, Samuel Baird, William Darling and Elijah Dechert.

The philanthropy of Dr. Grier was early manifested toward the African race then far more despised and neglected than to-day. The few that were in Reading he gathered together for occasional services, and in 1829 organized the

AFRICAN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, OF READING,

with twenty members, among whom were John, Samuel, and Hiram Fry, Richard Brown, Dorsey, Grayson, Nelson and others. At first a frame building on Washington above Tenth street was occupied, which about 1846 was removed to give place to the present commodious brick building. In 1834 Rev. Chas. W. Schultz was elected pastor, who remained until some time in 1837. Following him the Rev. Thomas P. Hunt supplied the pulpit somewhat irregularly for about sixteen years. Following him in the line of pastoral supply were the Revs. E. J. Adams, now of Columbia, S. C., and Amos, whose stay was brief and of comparative unimportance. In this connection it is fit to put on record the eminent services of Mr. Hiram Fry, elder, to whose diligent oversight and faithful labors the very existence of this church to-day is due. He deserves thankful remembrance for his patient continuance in well doing and through manifold discouragements his cheerful earnestness and unwavering faith which have given life and coherence to this little band. The present pastor of the First Presbyterian Church upon his incumbency found them few and discouraged and gave what

labor was possible for their encouragement in pastoral ministry and administration of ordinances. On October 4, 1874, Mr. Tilghman M. Seidle, was ordained a ruling elder. On October 18, 1874, Rev. Wm. R. Templeton, graduate of Western Theological Seminary and licentiate of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, was ordained and installed pastor of this church, under whose wise management and intelligent and faithful ministry the church has taken a new lease of life, and promises a long and honorable career. Of the early members of the church there are living only four, viz: Mr. and Mrs. Hiram Fry, Mrs. Hannah Fry, and Mrs. Peter Cline, who in the present membership of sixty-six, and in the one hundred and ten Sabbath school scholars, see the fruit of their prayerful labors, and rejoice in the promise of the future.

THE PASTORATE OF REV. DR. GRIER.

The ministry of Dr. Grier was not accompanied with any large and rapid increase. The growth of the English-speaking population was slow, and of them but few were interested in the Gospel. But no less faithfully did he sow the seed. On one occasion, it is said, he appealed to the little handful of hearers scattered here and there over the house, "Do you not think I am weary of preaching to these empty seats and bare walls?" But God did not leave him without the sight. He is believed to have died of joy. After so many years of unrequited toil he invited the Rev. Charles G. Finney, the celebrated Evangelist, then laboring in Philadelphia, to Reading. And one week-night shortly after the evangelical services had commenced, contemplating the scene before him—the crowded church, the deep solemnity, the earnest looks, the tearful eyes, and rejoicing converts—he remarked, some say, to Mr. Finney, others, in the public prayer, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Retiring to sleep that night in usual health, his wife entering the room soon after found him dead. His work was done. His prayer was answered. He seems to have been in many respects fitted to his place. Certainly the value of his labors cannot be overestimated. We find him versatile, useful, zealous, honored. His very presence, graceful and attractive, reposes as a pleasant memory in the hearts of those who remain. He sent the best trained boys to Dickinson College and thus displayed the excellence of his classical training. He assumed a charge in the face of many obstacles built up by the German language

and traditions, and in organizing a congregation and building a church he vindicated his boldness, tact, and faithful ministry. In his sympathy and labors for a despised race he displayed a philanthropy at once resolute and tender, an imitation unusual in his day of Him who was no respecter of persons as He went about continually doing good. He was evidently a versatile and diligent worker. He conducted his academy, in its most prosperous days retaining the responsibility of its most important classes, was president of the board of trustees, active in the management of the building operations, a cultivated singer he led the music of his church, zealous in all financial solicitations and schemes, public spirited and philanthropic, as well as punctual, laborious and faithful in his pastoral ministrations.

We believe the autobiography of Rev. Chas. G. Finney in its indirect references and omissions does a gross injustice to the memory of Rev. Dr. Grier. Everything in the history of this church vindicates him as a wise philanthropist, a patriotic citizen, a learned man, a skillful teacher, and above all, a laborious, earnest and instructive pastor and preacher who laid foundations "as a wise master builder."

The dramatic death of Dr. Grier, improved by the stern preaching of Rev. Mr. Finney, created a profound impression. The community was stirred to its very depths. Day by day, and three times a day, for successive weeks, the "old white church" was crowded. His address was direct and practical. His methods demanded an instant and public decision and avowal. He confronted that sacramentarianism which expressed itself in the words of a prominent minister of the borough with whom he walked to Dr. Grier's funeral, and who claimed that he "had made sixteen hundred Christians by baptism." The labors of this honored Evangelist extending from the middle of January till May, 1829, were very remarkably blessed, both in the number—forty-three—who were added to the communion of the church and some of whom by their long life of christian service remain to testify their gratitude, and in the stimulus given to pure and undefiled religion throughout the community. For more than two years after the death of Dr. Grier the church was without a pastor, the pulpit being supplied at different times by Rev. Herman Norton, Rev. Binckley Carll, Rev. Mr. Stevens and Rev. Henry Hotchkiss.

REV. ELEAZAR HOLT, THE SECOND PASTOR.

On June 11th, 1832, Rev. Eleazar Holt was ordained and installed pastor. At the time of his induction the church numbered ninety-three communicants. His pastorate seems to have been quiet and uneventful. He died Feb. 13th, 1835.

In the following spring appeared Rev. Elbridge G. Cutler, who, after preaching one Sabbath to the great acceptance of the people who wished to call him, was taken suddenly ill with pneumonia and in a few days died April 28, 1836, at the house of Hon. William Strong. His body lies in the Presbyterian church lot in Charles Evans Cemetery.

THE WOMELSDORF PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

In 1834, on the 25th, 27th and 28th of July, the English Presbyterian church of Womelsdorf was organized with eleven members and the ordination and installation of Joseph D. Biles as ruling elder by Rev. James Patterson of Second Presbyterian of Philadelphia. On 27th day of September, in the same year, an eligible lot was presented—according to the terms of the deed “in consideration of the love they bear to the church of Christ, and the sum of one dollar”—by the Misses Francis and Lydia Moore, to whose liberality and zeal it was also largely due that a neat and substantial building was speedily erected. The pulpit was supplied by Rev. Wm. Smedmer until October 12, 1835, when, because of his withdrawal, the Rev. James M'Kim, of Wilmington Presbytery, became stated supply. At the expiration of a year he withdrew and devoted the rest of his life to the anti-slavery movement, in which he became an active and prominent leader. He was succeeded by Rev. Benj. M. Nyce. After a brief stay he left and was succeeded on December 24th, 1837, by Rev. W. W. Taylor. On July 8th, 1838, Walker Stephen and Lot Benson were ordained and installed by him as ruling elders. His ministry was reasonably successful and he remained till April 1st, 1840. He was succeeded by Rev. Richard Walker, who, after supplying them for one year, was succeeded by Rev. Samuel Shaefer who remained but eleven months. On October 1st, 1843, Rev A. G. Morss began preaching as stated supply and continued until July 19th, 1856.

As was to be expected from such frequent changes in its ministry, very little progress was made toward permanent results. The gaps

occasioned by removals and deaths were unfilled in the lack of continued effort, and discouragement was inevitable. The good that was done is to be attributed largely to the unflagging interest and self-denying labors of Mr. Wm. Moore and family, Catharine Taylor and Walker Stephen who were in labors and zeal abundant. Through the removal or death of these faithful ones the services languished and the congregation dwindled. On September 26th, 1868, in answer to the prayer of Walker Stephen and Wm. Moore, the Court of Common Pleas of this county, appointed Walker Stephen, Dr. William Moore, James Moore and William G. Moore of Womelsdorf, Thomas Searles of Marion township, Nathaniel Ferguson of Heidelberg township, and David E. Benson, Francis R. Schmucker, James H. Norton and William H. Livingood of Reading, trustees of that church property. The effect of this action, as was intended, was to place the property in charge of the trustees of this church, and thus it remains to this day.

The only survivor of the original membership is Walker Stephen, with whose voice, regular presence, cheerful faith, and wonderful memory of God's word we were so long familiar in this church, but who now removed to his old home at Womelsdorf, in an honored old age, waits for the Master's call.

For the past fifteen years the only Presbyterian preaching there has been at rare intervals, and by the courtesy of these Trustees the house has been occupied and an annuity of \$50 a year left by Miss Lydia Moore to be appropriated to Presbyterian preaching in Womelsdorf is used by an Evangelical Lutheran congregation connected with the General Synod. It is hoped that in the near future, in the place of the fathers will grow up the children, who will assume the responsibilities of the father's house and repair the broken walls.

REV. WILLIAM STERLING, THE THIRD PASTOR.

On December 22d, 1835, Rev. William Sterling was ordained and installed the third pastor of this church. The denomination was at this time in the midst of the agitations which led to the Disruption of 1836-37. The congregation followed its pastor into the New School Presbyterian Church and became associated with the Third Presbytery of Philadelphia. The first few years of this pastorate seem to have been discouraging. The people, before the brief pastorate of Rev. Mr. Holt, had been for several years without a pastor, and

the agitations of the Church had doubtless here as otherwheres distracted them from spiritual activities. Whether these or some more private local influences were the cause, we have no record. The fact remains that so cold and disheartening was the spiritual life that on July 24th, 1839, the Session adopted the singular resolution that "in view of the low state of religion, the celebration of the Lord's supper be deferred." But faithfulness has its reward and in the darkest hour, lo, the morning comes. His ministry was subsequently blessed with success, and especially honored in 1843 with a revival of religion through which at one communion fifty-five were received on profession of faith. This is all the more remarkable and creditable in that it appears to have been owing to no external or unusual helps, but to the ordinary means of grace used faithfully and prayerfully by a diligent and devoted pastor. The roll numbered but ninety-three on his accession to the pastorate. He received 197, of whom 144 were admitted upon confession of faith, among whom were Henry Darling, now Rev. H. Darling, D. D., of Albany, N. Y., William Strong, now Judge of U. S. Supreme Court at Washington, D. C., Henry Birkenbine and Henry Raiguel, now ruling elders of the church in Philadelphia. He also inducted into the office of ruling elder, Charles Davis and William Eckert, who were ordained May, 1842, and William Strong and Charles J. Davis, ordained December, 1847. The close of his pastorate left a membership of 198. Concerning his memories of this pastorate he writes: "The Presbyterian Church though small was exceedingly interesting. Judge Darling, Elijah Dechert, Thomas O'Brien, Thomas McCombs, James Norton, were Aarons and Hurs. The utmost harmony prevailed. They were earnest in prayer and faithful workers. A number of the families were refined and lovely, and they contributed greatly to my happiness. Whatever success attended my labors was owing in no small degree to my efficient co-workers, most if not all of whom have gone to their reward. This was the happiest period of my life. No people could be dearer to a pastor than mine were to me. They were my first love and long did they retain their place in my heart, and I had abundant reason to believe that my affection was fully reciprocated." He resigned December 30th, 1844, after a pastorate of nine years and three months. He still lives in Williamsport, Pa., enjoying in the retiracy of a peaceful old age, the comfort of a good conscience and the deserved rest of a devoted service.

THE REV. E. J. RICHARDS, THE FOURTH PASTOR.

In his departure the congregation paid him the unusual compliment of permitting him to name his successor. Without having heard or known of him but simply upon the recommendation of the retiring pastor they gave a unanimous call to the Rev. E. J. Richards, of Philadelphia, which not immediately but upon its renewal soon after was accepted. He was installed October 14th, 1846. One of the first and most memorable results of this ministry was the transfer of this congregation from the "old white church" to the present beautiful and commodious house. After an occupancy of twenty-three years services were held in it for the last time on May 9th, 1847. It was then taken down and the material incorporated with the new edifice on the present eligible location.

On June 24th, 1847, the corner-stone of this edifice was laid by the pastor Rev. E. J. Richards, Rev. Mr. Wiggins of the Methodist E. Church offered prayer, and Rev. Albert Barnes and Rev. Dr. Parker delivered addresses. The box taken from the corner-stone of the old church was opened and its contents found to be in a good state of preservation, and these together with a copy of the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, and a copy of each of the newspapers published in this city were deposited in the same stone which was incorporated with this edifice. There was also deposited a document containing a brief history of the church, dated "in the 71st year of American Independence, James K. Polk being President of the United States, Francis R. Shunk being Governor of Pennsylvania, Peter Filbert being the first Mayor of Reading, J. Pringle Jones, John Stauffer and William High being Judges of the Court," and containing the following list:

Pastor :

Rev. E. J. Richards.

Elders :

William Darling, Elijah Dechert, William Eckert, Charles Davis.

Trustees :

William Eckert, Pres.,	William Strong, Sec.,	John S. Pearson, Treas.,
William Peacock,	Charles J. Davis,	Henry R. Raiguel,
	James McKnight.	

Building Committee :

Samuel Bell, William Darling, William Eckert, Thomas M'Combs.

Architects and Builders :

John X. Miller, J. V. Craig.

Until the completion of the Lecture Room the congregation through a courteous invitation worshiped with what is now the St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, the pastors preaching alternately. By a pleasant coincidence we welcome to-day many of the same congregation who with a true Christian fraternity come to rejoice with us over our congregational prosperity. The church was dedicated Nov. 19, 1848. Rev. Dr. De Witt, of Harrisburg, took part in the services, the pastor offered the dedicatory prayer, and Rev. Albert Barnes preached the sermon from Psalms 65:4, "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." The entire cost of the original building, which was not all paid until July 6, 1852, was \$24,000.

For twenty-five years Rev. E. J. Richards, D. D., labored here in a useful and honored ministry. His was an epoch crowded with history. He saw this church growing from a membership of 198 to that of 328. He saw the borough of Reading with its 10,000 inhabitants becoming the third city of the State. He saw his beloved nation in the throes of the Rebellion, and earnestly sanctifying his personal and official influence to the cause of liberty and order he lived to see the nation emerging into its larger and freer life. He looked upon the Disruption of '37 and lived to preside as the first Moderator of the reunited Synod of Philadelphia. On Sept. 19, 1858, he installed Lot Benson, transferred from Womelsdorf, and ordained and installed Wm. M. Baird and Isare Erdman as ruling elders, of whom remain Lot Benson, unremitting in his affectionate devotion to all the church's best interests, and Isare Erdman, like Moses of old, spiritually as well as physically his eye undimmed and his vigor unabated.

On July 4, 1858, was organized what has since been known as the Calvary Presbyterian-Sabbath School, meeting in Franklin street school house. It was at first a "Union Mission Sunday School," having among its officers and teachers representatives of different denominations, but very soon became exclusively Presbyterian in its influence under the patronage of this church. Beginning with a membership of forty-five, it has now upon its roll one hundred and thirty-four. The whole number taught since its organization is 3,600, and the whole amount of money collected is \$935. The list of Superintendents is as follows: During 1858, Obadiah Shingle; 1859, David Hill; 1859-63, Charles Davis; 1863-4, Henry A. Monyer; 1864-66, F. R. Schmucker;

1866-75, Henry A. Monyer; 1875-76, Gerald F. Dale; 1876, F. R. Schmucker. The school is to-day full of vitality, an honor to this church and a blessing to its neighborhood.

On June 28th, 1868, a meeting was held by several zealous Presbyterians in the school house near Alsace Church in the northern part of the city, to organize what they called at the time the "Union Sunday School of Muhlenberg." The following Sabbath, and until the weather compelled a change, the meetings were held in the barn of W. E. C. Coxe, Superintendent of the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad Rolling Mill. In September of the same year it was removed to the second floor of the Rolling Mill office, the room being kindly granted by Mr. Coxe for that purpose. At the same time the name was changed to that of "Bethany Sunday School." Later in the same autumn it was removed to the school house immediately north of where the chapel now stands, since converted into a residence. The Bethany Presbyterian Chapel was built as a thank-offering for the reunion of the Old and New School Presbyterian Churches, on the present site on North Ninth Street, which, with the lot, cost \$5,472.40, and on September 11th, 1870, dedicatory services were held by Rev. Dr. Richards. With a short interval the school has been under the faithful superintendence of Mr. S. D. Blackman. Beginning with forty scholars, it now has an attendance of one hundred and sixty-five. Since its organization there has been raised the approximate amount of \$1,540. A majority of the workers living in the neighborhood of the parent church one great disadvantage has been the difficulty of access to the field, yet there has been a great amount of cheerful sacrifice and persevering labor, and the indications are hopeful that at an early day it will develop into a Presbyterian church.

In 1869, largely through the interest and christian liberality of N. Ferguson, Esq., one of our members, a tasteful stone chapel was erected at Robesonia at a cost of \$7,000 by the Robesonia Furnace Company. On May 1st, 1870, it was dedicated to the service of Almighty God, Revs. Robert Adair and James Neil, of Philadelphia, taking part in the devotional exercises, and Rev. Dr. Richards preaching the sermon from Psalms, 87: 2: "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion." In the afternoon Rev. Mr. Neil preached from Psalms, 80: 1, 2: "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; Thou that dwellest between the cherubim, shine forth." The Rev. Henry A. Smeltz had charge of the chapel

from May 28th, 1871, till February 1st, 1872, and did efficient service. He was succeeded for nearly a year by Rev. Alexander Scott, of Philadelphia. The chapel is admirably located, and promises to become a centre of christian pleasure and influence to the community. It is entirely undenominational, having no responsibility to this or any other church. It is mentioned in this connection because its origin was so largely due, and its continuance and work are almost entirely dependent upon the interest and liberality of those who belong to our household.

Of the details of Dr. Richards' pastorate it is not necessary to make mention, as they are familiar and available to all in the Memorial Volume issued upon his decease. Suffice it to record here the tribute to his virtues and work so aptly and gracefully expressed upon yonder tablet :

THIS TABLET

Records the affection and respect of the members
of the First Presbyterian congregation for the
Rev. ELIAS J. RICHARDS, D. D.,
for over twenty-five years pastor of this church,
distinguished for his talents,
high literary culture
and ardent piety.
Earnest and faithful as a minister of the Gospel,
bearing with him at all times a deep sense of
the responsibilities of his sacred office,
His spotless life,
dignity of manners, tenderness of heart,
and christian charity toward all men secured
for him, in an eminent degree; not only the
love and attachment of his own people, but the
confidence and esteem of this entire community
which recognized in him
a leading mind,
and mourned his departure as
a public loss.

Born in England, Jan. 14, 1813.
Died at Reading, March 25, 1872.

REV. WALLACE RADCLIFFE, THE FIFTH PASTOR.

On the last Sabbath of November, in 1871, the Rev. Wallace Radcliffe, of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, took temporary charge during what was hoped would be but the temporary illness of the pastor. Dr. Richards died March 25th, 1872, and on June 29th, 1872, Rev. Wallace Radcliffe was installed by the Presbytery of Lehigh, within whose bounds this church was located by the re-adjustment of the Presbyterial limits in the Re-union. April 12th, 1872, the system of a limited term eldership, commonly known as the "Rotary System," was adopted and Lot Benson and William M. Baird were installed, and Caleb Wheeler, William Harden, James Jameson and J. H. Sternbergh, were ordained and installed May 12th, 1872. On October 19, 1872, William M. Baird, Esq., who for more than fourteen years had served the church in the ruling eldership acceptably, and was held in honor by those that were without, was removed by death. James F. Smith was elected for his unexpired term, and was ordained and installed Jan. 5, 1873. On the first Sabbath in March, 1875, the present pastor was stricken with pneumonia while preaching. After a severe illness he was enabled through the kindness of his people to take a four months' trip in Europe. During this absence the pulpit was ably supplied by Rev. Joseph Vance, since of the First Presbyterian Church, of Carlisle, Pa.

The mission work becoming too onerous for the pastor, we fortunately secured the efficient services of Rev. W. J. Arney of the Presbytery of Lackawanna, who on December, 28, 1875, assumed the oversight of Bethany Chapel, Robesonia Chapel, and Womelsdorf Church. By his pastoral diligence and pulpit attractiveness he has already inspired his charge with new life, and we hopefully look for a speedy growth from his labors of at least one more Presbyterian Church.

In the winter of 1875-'76 this city was blessed with part of that religious wave which swept over and refreshed the land. An increasing religious interest in this church was especially manifest early in the fall in the enlarged attendance and interest of the people at the prayer meeting and the expression of desire in christian prayer and conversation. The Rev. S. Taggart, of Pittsburg, Pa., State Secretary of the Y. M. C. A., and Prof. Wm. Johnston, an evangelist of Bethany Presbyterian Church, Phila-

delphia, were invited here by the Y. M. C. A., of this city. The ministers of the Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran—General Synod—Church of God and Evangelical Association united for the first time in the history of this city in evangelistic work. A choir of one hundred christian singers was organized and added largely to the spiritual impression and efficiency of the work. On March 17th, 1876, the work began in this church which was used throughout the services. Two and sometimes three services a day were held. Every night the building was packed. Frequently overflow meetings would be held in adjoining churches, and every night a young men's meeting would be held at nine o'clock in St. Matthew's Lutheran church. These blessed scenes are yet fresh in our memories—the crowded assemblies now hushed in silent prayer, and now swelling forth the triumphant anthem, "Hallelujah, 'tis done," strong men bowed in conviction, hardened men rejoicing in the new found Saviour, and scores crowding the inquiry-room nightly crying, "What must we do to be saved?" Those were days of the Lord's right hand when labor was a joy and burdens were unfelt, for we all seemed possessed of the Spirit. For three weeks the services continued and the countless blessings of that season to the hearts and homes of this city will be known only in that Day of Revelation when the faithful laborer and converted soul shall together be jeweled and crowned.

During the pastorate of the present incumbent there have been received into this church upon profession of faith, 152; upon certificate, 88; making a total addition of 240. The present membership of the church is 425. There have been baptized of adults, 19; and of infants, 48. The whole number of children under instruction is about 500. The whole number of members that have been connected with this church since its organization is one thousand and eighty.

There have been collected during the present pastorate for home mission, \$2,261; foreign, \$1,984; education, \$257; publication, \$229; church erection, \$271; ministerial relief, \$1,474; freedmen, \$165; general assembly, \$177; miscellaneous, \$22,440; total, \$29,259.

In our financial history there remains but a slight debt of scarcely \$3,000, which in the jubilations of this hour should be liquidated as a thank offering for the past and a proof of God for the future, that this church may leap forth to the responsibilities and activities of the coming years unburdened and with alert step. The condition

of affairs augers well. The different organizations for parish work—the sewing school, sewing society, two young ladies' societies and pastor's sodality—are well officered and in healthful vigor. Our financial business could not be in better hands than in those of the present Board of Trustees. Our Bench of Elders for spiritual oversight commands the respect and confidence not only of this church but of the entire community. Our three sabbath schools are large and aggressive, our public services and prayer meetings full and interesting. Let the fullness of success but stimulate to renewed activity. Let us be true to the inheritance of the fathers. The Davids have gathered the stones, the Solomons must not be lax or awary in building the temple.

In front of yonder entrance stands that rare and ancient tree—whether tamarind or locust we know not—its roots watered through the years by an unfailing spring beneath, its branches widely-spreading and reaching toward the clouds, designating this place of sacred service, affording grateful shade to the worshipper approaching these gates, and as it stands in its garments of living green its majestic beauty is the pride not only of every worshipper but of every citizen.

So through the generations may this church stand—not questioned, indeed, as to its name or character, but—positive and true to its Presbyterian seed, its roots quickened by the perennial fountain of the water of life, its branches evermore outspreading in grateful shade and heavenly beauty as it stands a joy and blessing to the city, the guide and protection to weary yet gladdened thousands of the generations yet unborn as they enter, to go no more out, within the portals of that temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Church Officers
For Year 1876.

Pastor :

REV. WALLACE RADCLIFFE.

Ruling Elders :

LOT BENSON,	CALEB WHEELER,
JAMES JAMESON,	WILLIAM HARDEN,
JAMES F. SMITH,	JAMES H. STERNBERGH.

Board of Trustees :

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GEORGE F. WELLS.

Sexton :

JOHN KLINE.

Sunday School Officers For Year 1876.

Superintendent :

JAMES H. STERNBERGH.

Asst. Supt.

WM. G. MCGOWAN.

Secretary :

DAVIS P. HARDEN.

Treas. of Mission and School Fund :

WILLIAM J. HARDEN.

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Directress :

MRS. CLARA BRENHOLTZ,

Asst. Directress :

MRS. F. A. WHITMAN.

Organist :

MISS LESSIE RASER.

Organist Main Department :

PROF. R. WILLIAM STAPF.

Bethany Mission School-Supt.,
Calvary " " " "

S. D. BLACKMAN.

F. R. SCHMUCKER.